What are anecdotals? They are written documentation of what a teacher sees and hears children do and say. The record includes the who, what, where, when and how of what occurred.

Anecdotal records are factual and objective. They do not include judgment or interpretations. They describe the child’s action, gestures, facial, expression and using quotations. Ask yourself, can I hear it? Can I see it?

You should avoid labels, intentions, judgment, assumptions or negatives.

Below are tips to help you prepare for and optimize your observations and anecdotals.

* Know the objectives and dimensions – this will help you keep in mind which skills and/or behaviors you are looking for, so you don’t waste time writing notes that are not relevant
* Practice writing anecdotals
* Write date, time, location and a description of what you hear and see.
* Observations can be spontaneous or planned
* Have a simple yet effective system to use. Have documentation materials in several places in the classroom to make it accessible to you when needed.
* Create a list of commonly used abbreviations- this will help you save time while observing
* Stock learning centers intentionally- include items in learning centers that children are likely to use as you observe the focus indicator.
* For planned observation- be prepared- determine the place and time, know the objective/dimension and review typical development within that area
* Write anecdotals record about small group activities-to do this, start with a generic note describing the activity then add an anecdotal record for each child who participated during the small group.
  + - Limit the number of children (4 to 6)
    - This should NOT be done for large group activities
* Quality over quantity-be sure to keep several indicators in mind when observing. There is almost always overall with multiple indicators.

Teaching Teams should schedule a regular time to review and discuss their anecdotals to help determine what else you need to plan and observe for each child and to avoid collecting too much data for one objective/dimension.

There are many ways that anecdotals can be organized and stored. Staff should choose what works best for them. Examples:

* Folder for each child
* Index cards in a file box with a section for each child
* Three-ring binder notebooks for each child
* Hanging shoe bag, with pockets labeled for each child
* Having the full list of Objectives for Development and Learning laminated for each child can help track which indictors have been completed and which ones are needed individually.

Example of well written anecdotals:

Kate, Dallas and Rita are in Dramatic Play Area that has been converted into a Pet Shop. Rita announces, “Boots is missing. She is not in her basket!” Boots is one of the stuffed kittens used in play area. Dallas and Kate join in the search for Boots. “She is not in another kitten’s basket or in the bathtub” Kate said. “Let’s ask some other people if they have seen Boots” says Dallas. Rita, Kate and Dallas start asking other friends in the classroom if they have seen Boots. No other friend saw Boots. Rita said “We need to make some signs” and went to get paper and markers. Kate and Dallas cleared space at the table. The children begin drawing pictures of Boots. Then the children hung the signs around the classroom. The children also brought signs to the playground and hung signs around the slide as well.

Jacob picked up a paddle in the gross motor room and swung it at the yellow ball. He laughed and ran to chase the ball. He hit the ball a second time and it rolled under the table. Jacob said, “Uh Oh”. The teacher asked, “where did the ball go?” Jacob pointed to the ball under the table. The teacher said, “it went underneath, bend over and get the ball”. Jacob squatted down and reached under the table and picked up the ball.

Mike pointed at the door as a friend was coming through the door. “Hannah” Mike shouted and ran to his friend and smiled. The teacher asked, “Did Hannah come to school today?” Mike said “yeah”

While holding and talking to Kayla, Kayla was smiling. The teacher then put Kayla on the floor play mat and Kayla started to cry. The teacher picked Kayla back up and she stopped crying.

The teacher was lifting Jack up onto the changing table for a diaper change. Teacher said “one, two” and before teacher said “three” Jack yelled “three!”

During free play, Pat picked up a plastic rattle ball. She hit the ball against the shelf, then walked to the gate and with two hands raised the ball over her head and threw the ball over the gate. When the ball hit the floor the teacher said “what was that noise?” Pat turned to the teacher, smiled and pointed at the ball.

Examples of unacceptable Anecdotals:

At circle time, all the children count to 10

After breakfast, the children wash their hands and get a book.

John will walk to his favorite toy.

Sarah was sad that her mom left.

Christina got frustrated that she had to go to the bathroom

Patrick gets sad when bottle is taken away